# Be "Avalanche Aware"

ALWAYS OBTAIN WEATHER AND avalanche information before entering the Park's backcountry. At times, backcountry travel may not be advised due to high or extreme avalanche conditions.

### Storms

· 80% of all avalanches occur during or soon after a storm

### Snowfall

· Snow falling at a rate of 1" or more per hour increases avalanche danger rapidly
· With high winds, leeward slopes can become dangerously loaded with snow, even with just a few inches of snowfall

### Weather Conditions

· Rapidly changing weather conditions (wind, temperature, precipitation) can cause unstable snow

### Sounds

· Unstable snow can settle beneath a skier's weight with a "whumff"

### Recent and Prior Avalanche Activity

· If you see a new avalanche, suspect dangerous conditions
· Avoid old slide paths, steep open gullies/slopes; watch for areas with small trees bent over and trees with broken limbs

### Route Selection

· If you must cross a dangerous slope, stay high and near the top; avoid avalanche fracture lines
· If you must climb or descend a dangerous slope, go straight up or down; do not traverse back and forth
· Areas of dense timber, ridges, or rocky outcrops can be safer; use them for lunch and rest stops
· Spend as little time as possible on open slopes
· Only one person should cross a dangerous slope at a time
· Remove ski pole and ski safety straps and loosen all equipment
· Put on a hat and mittens and fasten clothing securely
· Each person should carry a shovel
· Carry and learn to use an avalanche transceiver
·Report any unstable areas to a ranger

*Steep slopes and snow cornices on Bumpass Mountain* *(NPS Photo by Kathleen Pietras)*

### If You Are Caught In An Avalanche

· Discard all equipment
· Make swimming motions and try to stay on top, working your way to the avalanche's side
· If you are pulled beneath the surface, keep your mouth closed
· As you begin to slow to a stop, make air space in front of your face with your hands; keep your arms close to your body
· Try to remain calm; you will use less oxygen

### If You Are A Survivor

· Mark the place where you last saw the person buried and search directly downslope
· Probe the snow in an even line across the snowfield using ski poles, shovels, or skis
· If you can, send someone for help
· If you are alone, do not abandon your search and go for help unless it is minutes away; the buried person has less than a 50% chance of survival after 15 minutes

## United States Avalanche Danger Descriptors

Always plan ahead when traveling into the backcountry. Before leaving home, you can learn more about avalanche safety and check on current conditions in the Lassen area by calling Park Headquarters. The Mt. Shasta Avalanche Hotline at (530) 926-9613 (Lassen's conditions are similar to Shasta's) and the National Avalanche Center's website, *www.avalanche.org/~nac*, are also excellent sources for safety tips and information on avalanche danger.

Check weather reports and avalanche conditions posted at the Chalet and Loomis Ranger Station. Lassen Volcanic uses the standard color-coded system shown at right.

| Danger Level | Avalanche Probability and Avalanche Trigger | Degree and Distribution of Avalanche Danger | Recommended Action in the Backcountry |
|---|---|---|---|
| LOW (green) | Natural avalanches very unlikely. Human triggered avalanches unlikely. | Generally stable snow. Isolated areas of instability. | Travel is generally safe. Normal caution is advised. |
| MODERATE (yellow) | Natural avalanches unlikely. Human triggered avalanches possible. | Unstable slabs possible on steep terrain. | Use caution in steeper terrain on certain aspects |
| CONSIDERABLE (orange) | Natural avalanches possible. Human triggered avalanches probable. | Unstable slabs probable on steep terrain. | Be increasingly cautious in steeper terrain. |
| HIGH (red) | Natural and human triggered avalanches likely. | Unstable slabs likely on a variety of aspects and slope angles. | Travel in avalanche terrain is not recommended. Safest travel on windward ridges of lower angle slopes without steeper terrain above. |
| EXTREME (black) | Widespread natural or human triggered avalanches certain. | Extremely unstable slabs certain on most aspects and slope angles. Large, destructive avalanches possible. | Travel in avalanche terrain should be avoided and travel confined to low angle terrain well away from |